

HORSEMAN RESCUES WYCOMBE

TONY HORSEMAN, so often the saviour of Wycombe Wanderers over the last 15 years, turned up trumps again on Saturday by scoring two goals and saving the Blues from an embarrassing defeat at Leytonstone.

Wanderers were trailing 1-0 at half time and bore little resemblance to a side who had recently taken over third position in the Rothmans Isthmian League table. But then 'Bodger' struck. His first goal was scored from an almost impossible angle and a second, ten minutes from time, proved enough to give his side three points.

Without Horseman's superb finishing, I doubt if Wycombe would have come away with even a point from Granleigh Road. For most of the match they were well below their best and were made to look a distinctly or-

inary outfit by the club in second-from-bottom place in Division One.

Leytonstone, however, were out to make an impression on Saturday for one reason. They had a new

position. Derek Cotterill came into midfield with Mick Holifield moving into the forwards for the injured Geoff Anthony. Just to add to manager Brian Lee's considerable injury problems, Cotterill had to be carried off with a shin injury six

slipped inside Cotterill's tackle and then chipped a lovely shot over John Maskell and into the net. The goal showed the experience Mitchell learnt in professional soccer with Brighton before he got the 'chop' from manager Brian Clough.

Almost immediately, Cherry had to leave the field with an injury to be replaced by Loosey, who turned out to be more of a threat to Wycombe's defence.

The early reverse certainly upset Wycombe who were unable to get their game together at all. Passes were hurriedly sent astray or blocked at the last moment and the front runners, receiving poor service from midfield, could produce little to worry the home side. It was almost half an hour before the visitors got in their first strike — from Terry Reardon, whose drive went just past the upright.

Before half-time, however, Wanderers improved considerably and three or four chances were created.

Leytonstone 1, Wycombe Wanderers 2 REPORT BY STUART EARP

manager — Ted Hardy — in the chair for the first time and every one of the home side must have realised they were playing for places in the side before the manager starts to sign new men from outside the club. All eleven of them did their job and succeeded in making Wycombe struggle for most of the match.

There were several changes in the Wanderers side. John Maskell and John Delaney came back to the defences but, as expected Ray Eaton had not recovered from his elbow dislocation and Dave Alexander was drafted into the right back

minutes into the second half.

Conditions were made difficult from the start when a short shower fell as the players were warming up but it was Leytonstone who took the initiative and, indeed, looked the superior team for the first half.

The Stones' poor position in the table is difficult to fathom. They have several experienced players — Tony Mackie, Mike Smith, John Brooks and Ted Raynor — and yet the results just don't seem to be going their way. They had an ideal start to this match when they took the lead after just 16 minutes.

A cross from the right skidded off Mal Cherry's head and fell to Roy Mitchell on the far side of the box. He controlled well,

Horseman missed an open goal from Holifield's cross and then the crossbar robbed John Delaney of a goal when the big centre half jumped above the defence to power in a header. Holifield and Delaney both went close before the interval but Leytonstone held out to retain their lead.

Cotterill's injury soon in the second half didn't help Wycombe's cause — Dave Bullock coming in at full back and Alexander moving into midfield.

Wanderers, however, began to show much improved form in this half. Their teamwork was tighter and the passing was a great deal better than in the first 45 minutes. As a result, chances came more regularly and Dylan Evans was only a few inches away from an equaliser when he headed over the top after an hour's play.

Then, after two quick corners (Wanderers had 13 compared with Leytonstone's two), the Blues equalised thanks to a brilliant piece of finishing by Horseman. Delaney thumped the ball upfield and after Evans and Alexander had combined well, the ball was threaded through to Horseman. He took the ball wide, too wide it seemed to have any chance of scoring, but when he was almost on the bye-line he somehow curled the ball back amidst a cordon of defenders and sent it over the line from the narrowest of angles. Only Horseman could have scored a goal like this and it put his side right back into the game.

Until that moment, Wycombe had scarcely looked like finding the target and there were sighs of relief from many of the visiting contingent.

The equaliser proved a real boost to Wycombe. And within nine minutes they were ahead — again thanks to Horseman. Goalkeeper Mackie must take some of the blame for this one. A long ball downfield bounced once before Mackie tried to clear on the edge of the box. Evans and Horseman challenged with two defenders and it was Horseman, alert as ever, who saw the ball first, sending a shot trundling along the turf and into the net.

Soon afterwards Alexander drove just over the top but Leytonstone were far from dead and two efforts in the closing stages almost earned them a point. The balding Stan Spicer forced a good save from Maskell with a 20 yard drive and then Loosey had the best chance to snatch a draw. He cut inside from the right during injury time and fired a powerful shot just over the crossbar.

And so Wycombe took three points to maintain their challenge at the top of the table. As someone remarked as we left the ground, "It can't be bad when a team plays badly and still picks up three points." It can't be bad indeed.

LEYTONSTONE: A. Mackie, L. Tilley, J. Smith, M. Smith, R. Hames, R. Mitchell, L. Raynor, G. Shumake, M. Charry (sub G. Loosey 17 mins.), J. Brooks, S. Spicer.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Alexander, K. Mead, J. Delaney, P. Birdseye, D. Cotterill (sub D. Bullock 51 mins.), T. Reardon, H. Kennedy, A. Horseman, D. Evans, M. Holifield.

Referee: A. Ward (London).

Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Horseman 2 (71, 80), Leytonstone — Mitchell (16).